

## A Message from the Commissioner of Public Lands

Thank you for your interest in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on-going efforts to improve the rules governing access on state-owned lands. The department is in the early stages of a long public process to revise and update existing parts of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) that pertain to the use of managed lands and roads. Unchanged since 1970, improved and updated WACs would provide for a safer and more enjoyable experience for people accessing and recreating on DNR-managed lands, while ensuring the department continue its' primary and fiduciary responsibility to generate revenue for the state trust.

DNR's intent is to examine and propose improvements to WAC 332-52 and is working with the public, as well as other state agencies, to ensure the safety of the ever-increasing number of users while protecting the lands and resources under the department's stewardship.

The department manages more than 5 million acres of state-owned forest, aquatic, agricultural, conservation and urban lands. Of these 5 million acres, approximately 2.2 million acres are forested trust lands managed by DNR. By law, state trust lands are managed to produce income for public schools, universities, prisons, state mental hospitals, community colleges, local services in many counties, and the state general fund. They are also managed to provide fish and wildlife habitat, as well as educational and recreational opportunities. Most of the recreation occurring on DNR managed lands takes place in forested trust lands.

Recognizing the importance of also allowing recreational opportunities on these lands, RCW 79.10.120 directs DNR to allow for multiple uses of trust lands when such uses are compatible with trust land management. The multitude of allowable uses include: recreation areas, trails, education and scientific studies, special events, hunting and fishing, as well as the maintenance of scenic areas and historic sites.

With many people recreating on and utilizing DNR-managed lands in many different ways, RCW 43.12.065 ensures uses can be made compatible by giving the department the authority to adopt and enforce WACs pertaining to public use of state-owned lands. In accordance with the prescribed State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and Rulemaking processes, the department initiated a public scoping process in October of 2004, which consisted of eight public meetings throughout the state. In addition, an Advisory Committee was recently established with a broad range of citizen representatives and agency representatives, including: WDFW, IAC and State Parks.

Listening to comments received from the public scoping process, the Advisory Committee and the department is working to draft and update rule language, as well as potential alternatives, which allow for multiple uses and are compatible with the department's primary responsibilities. Consistent with SEPA, DNR will evaluate alternative draft rule language through an environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS will address the protection of the environment, public safety and compliance with existing laws. The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed language and the draft EIS before anything becomes finalized. A draft EIS and rule language is anticipated to be ready for public review and comment in August of 2006. Adoption of final EIS and rule language is not anticipated until 2007.

As we continue with this extensive public process, updates and information are available on the department's website at:

[http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/adm/comm/fs04\\_186.htm](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/adm/comm/fs04_186.htm)

[http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/amp/sepa/recreation/resp\\_summary.pdf](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/amp/sepa/recreation/resp_summary.pdf)

If you would like to be put on our mailing list to receive information regarding further opportunities to provide comments, please go to <http://www.dnr.wa.gov>. Click on SEPA under "Featured Sites" and go to the "Revision to Chapter 332-52 WAC". There will be a place to provide your contact information. If further information would be helpful, please contact Princess Jackson-Smith at 360-902-1066, [princess.Jackson-smith@wadnr.gov](mailto:princess.Jackson-smith@wadnr.gov).